

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of processing trade documents associated with a trade operation between a buyer and a seller comprising the steps of:

receiving an initiation document containing requirement information with respect to the trade operation;

5 mapping at least some of the requirement information into a database; and

automatically generating the trade documents utilizing the requirement information contained in the database.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the initiation document is a purchase order from the buyer.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of receiving the initiation document further comprises the step of receiving the initiation document electronically.

4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the initiation document is an application for a Letter of Credit from the buyer.

5. The method as recited in claim 4, further comprising the steps of:

maintaining a customer profile containing standard terms and conditions used by the buyer; and

5 automatically generating the Letter of Credit using the standard terms and conditions contained in the customer profile.

6. The method as recited in claim 5, further comprising the step of manually repairing the Letter of Credit if there is a discrepancy between the

requirement information contained in the database and the standard terms and conditions contained in the customer profile.

7. The method as recited in claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

issuing the Letter of Credit; and  
advising the seller of the issuance of the Letter of Credit.

8. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining a status of the trade operation on the database.

9. The method as recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of providing the buyer and seller access to the database in order to view the status of the trade operation.

10. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the step of providing the buyer and seller access to the database further comprises providing the access over the Internet.

11. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the step of providing the buyer and seller access to the database further comprises providing the access over a private network.

12. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the step of providing the buyer and seller access to the database further comprises providing the access over a dial up line.

13. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the step of providing the buyer and seller access to the database further comprises providing secure access.

14. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the secure access is provided by encryption, authentication and non-repudiation.

15. The method as recited in claim 9, further comprising the step of providing access to the database to additional parties designated by the buyer and seller.

16. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the initiating document is an application for a Letter of Credit, the method further comprising the steps of:

receiving multiple purchase orders from the buyer;

storing the multiple purchase orders; and

automatically generating the Letter of Credit using the stored multiple purchase orders.

17. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of generating a sales order in response to the initiation document.

18. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of generating the sales order further comprises the step of automatically generating the sales order using the requirement information contained in the database.

19. The method as recited in claim 18, wherein the seller desires to extend credit to the buyer with respect to the trade operation, the method further comprising the step of determining the availability of the credit using the automatically generated sales order.

20. The method as recited in claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

comparing the sales order to the requirement information contained

in the database in order to determine any discrepancies; and

5                   correcting the sales order if there are any discrepancies, thereby  
generating a matched sales order.

21. The method as recited in claim 20, further comprising the steps  
of:

generating a manufacturing specification sheet using the sales  
order;

5                   comparing the manufacturing specification sheet to the matched  
sales order in order to determine any discrepancies; and

correcting the manufacturing specification sheet if there are any  
discrepancies, thereby generating a matched manufacturing specification sheet.

22. The method as recited in claim 20, further comprising the steps  
of:

automatically generating shipping instructions using the matched  
sales order; and

5                   transmitting the shipping instructions to a shipper.

23. The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the shipping  
instructions are a draft bill of lading.

24. The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the step of  
transmitting the shipping instruction to the shipper further comprises the step of  
electronically transmitting the shipping instructions.

25. The method as recited in claim 20, further comprising the step  
of generating an invoice.

26. The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the step of

generating the invoice further comprises the step of automatically generating the invoice using the matched sales order.

27. The method as recited in claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

comparing the invoice to the matched sales order in order to determine any discrepancies; and

5 correcting the invoice if there are any discrepancies, thereby generating a matched invoice.

28. The method as recited in claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

receiving shipping instructions from a shipper;

5 comparing the shipping instructions to the matched invoice in order to determine any discrepancies; and

informing the shipper of the discrepancies whereby the shipper can correct the discrepancies and provide matched shipping instructions.

29. The method as recited in claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

automatically generating shipping insurance instructions using the matched invoice; and

5 transmitting the shipping insurance instructions to an insurer.

30. The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a certificate of insurance from the insurer; and

5 automatically generating the trade documents using the certificate of insurance, the matched invoice and the matched shipping instructions.

31. The method as recited in claim 28, further comprising the step of automatically generating the trade documents using the matched invoice and the matched shipping instructions.

32. The method as recited in claim 30, further comprising the step of electronically notifying parties specified by the buyer and the seller of the generation of the trade documents.

33. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the trade documents include the matched invoice, the matched shipping instructions, the certificate of insurance, packing slips, and a certificate of analysis.

34. The method as recited in claim 30, further comprising the step of presenting the trade documents to the buyer for negotiation.

35. The method as recited in claim 33, further comprising the step of performing a reconciliation function on behalf of the buyer.

36. The method as recited in claim 34, wherein the step of performing a reconciliation function on behalf of the buyer further comprises the step of reconciling a payment due under the trade documents against the requirement information.

37. The method as recited in claim 33, further comprising the steps of:

receiving payment information reflecting a payment made by the buyer to the seller; and

performing a reconciliation function on behalf of the seller in response to the payment information.

38. The method as recited in claim 36, wherein the step of performing a reconciliation function on behalf of the seller further comprises the step of reconciling the payment information against the matched invoice.

39. The method as recited in claim 30, further comprising the step of presenting the trade documents to a bank representing the buyer for negotiation.

40. The method as recited in claim 38, further comprising the step printing the documents at a location which is in proximity to the bank.

41. The method as recited in claim 39, wherein the trade documents are presented to the bank electronically.

42. A system of processing trade documents associated with a trade operation between a buyer and a seller, the system comprising:

an interface module receiving an initiation document containing requirement information with respect to the trade operation;

a database coupled to the interface module, the interface module mapping at least some of the requirement information into the database; and

a document generation module coupled to the database, the document generation module automatically generating the trade documents utilizing the requirement information contained in the database.

43. The system as recited in claim 41, wherein the initiation document is a purchase order from the buyer.

44. The system as recited in claim 41, wherein the interface module is an electronic interface module that receives the initiation document electronically.

45. The system as recited in claim 41, wherein the initiation document is an application for a Letter of Credit from the buyer.

46. The system as recited in claim 44, further comprising:

a customer profile database, the customer profile database containing standard terms and conditions used by the buyer; and

5 a Letter of Credit generation module coupled to the customer profile database, the Letter of Credit generation module automatically generating the Letter of Credit using the standard terms and conditions contained in the customer profile.

47. The system as recited in claim 45, further comprising a repair module coupled to the Letter of Credit generation module, the database, and the customer profile database, the repair module repairing the Letter of Credit if there is a discrepancy between the requirement information contained in the database and the standard terms and conditions contained in the customer profile.

48. The system as recited in claim 41, further comprising a tracking module coupled to the database, wherein a status of the trade operation is maintained in the database, the tracking module providing the buyer and seller access to the database in order to view the status of the trade operation.

49. The system as recited in claim 47, wherein the tracking module is coupled to the Internet and wherein the access to the database provided over the Internet.

50. The system as recited in claim 47, wherein the tracking module is coupled to a private network and wherein the access to the database is provided over the private network.

51. The system as recited in claim 47, wherein the tracking module is coupled to a dial up line, and wherein the access to the database is provides over the dial up line.

52. The system as recited in claim 47, wherein tracking module is coupled to the interface module and wherein the interface module provides secure access to the database.

53. The system as recited in claim 51, wherein the secure access is provided by encryption, authentication an non-repudiation.

54. The system as recited in claim 41, wherein the initiating document is an application for a Letter of Credit, the system further comprising:  
a purchase order storage facility coupled to the interface module and coupled to the Letter of Credit generation module, the purchase order storage facility multiple purchase orders received from the buyer through the interface module, and wherein the Letter of Credit generation module automatically generates the Letter of Credit using the multiple purchase orders stored in the purchase order storage facility.

55. The system as recited in claim 41, wherein the a document generation module generates a sales order in response to the initiation document.

56. The system as recited in claim 54, wherein the a document generation module generates the sales order using the requirement information contained in the database.

57. The system as recited in claim 55, further comprising a credit verification module coupled to the document generation module, wherein the credit verification module determines the availability of credit for the buyer using

5 sales order if the seller desires to extend credit to the buyer with respect to the trade operation.

58. The system as recited in claim 54, further comprising a comparison and correction module coupled to the document generation module and coupled to the database, the comparison module comparing the sales order to the requirement information contained in the database in order to determine any discrepancies, the comparison and correction module correcting the sales order if there are any discrepancies, thereby generating a matched sales order.

59. The system as recited in claim 57, wherein the document generation module further generates manufacturing specification sheet using the sales order, the comparison and correction module comparing the manufacturing specification sheet to the matched sales order in order to determine any discrepancies, and the comparison and correction module further correcting the manufacturing specification sheet if there are any discrepancies, thereby generating a matched manufacturing specification sheet.

60. The system as recited in claim 57, wherein the document generation module is coupled to the interface module and wherein the document generation module further generates shipping instructions using the matched sales order, and wherein the interface module transmits the shipping instructions to a shipper.

61. The system as recited in claim 57, wherein the document generation module further generates an invoice.

62. The system as recited in claim 60, wherein the comparison and correction module compares the invoice to the matched sales order in order to determine any discrepancies and corrects the invoice if there are any

63. The system as recited in claim 61, wherein document generation module generates required trade documents using the matched invoice.